



May 2017

## **CoM ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17**

### *The Companions – Fighting Isolation 2017*

Welcome to the CoM 2017 AGM and our annual report for the year 2016/17. Dare I say, that thanks to you, your prayers, efforts and support, we have had another wonderful year.

#### **Overview of the Year**

Looking back over the year there is much to celebrate, but let me pick just a few highlights from what we have achieved in 2016/17:

- The amazing Companions Café with our fantastic army of volunteers, running every Thursday, current attendance is at 90+ guests per week as services elsewhere are withdrawn. That's some 4,500 meals over the last year (£8,000).
- Our support for the OSJCT Care Homes, with Companions lead by Sarah and Max volunteering in the homes and helping at the county parties, OU CoM's pop up café in the Isis Home and funding for parties and outings (£3,500).
- The launch of the CoM Breakfast Club in collaboration with the Ordinariate at St.Gregory's & The Assumption, five star kindness and breakfast for the local homeless, its simply wonderful (Capital contribution for shower and parish centre £5,000, weekly costs to date £1,000).
- Supplies of sleeping bags and rucksacks to the homeless, distributing every week 4/5 bags and a similar number of rucksacks (£11,000) plus about £1,000 on much needed heavy duty socks.
- The CoM Monday soup run (£5,000) our Colchester Wednesday soup kitchen (£2k) and Oxford Open House (£8,000).

- 600 Christmas parcels packed with warm clothing, wash things and other essentials, all packaged up and distributed in London and around the country (Scotland, Cirencester, Colchester, Oxford and Cambridge).
- The successful launch of our St.Andrew's CoM thanks to Marc and the development of our Cambridge University CoM by Mathew.
- Our continued support for the St.Rose school for severely disabled teenagers by helping to fund their summer holiday at the Devon Calvert Trust (£2,200), thank you Duncan (and for the bike ride).
- Aid for impoverished Christian families in Bethlehem and our annual £1,000 donation to the Holy Family Hospital from the proceeds of our beautiful Christmas Carol Service that raised some £5,100.

And there is much, much more as detailed below. It is simply wonderful what has been and is being done by so many Companions taking on different works, thank you for your unstinting support and prayers. Onwards and upwards!

### **Facts and Figures**

I am delighted to say that we are now 674 strong, so definitely moving in the right direction; everyone though must know one other person who would be happy to join, inspired I hope by the contents of these few pages. The application form is on the website.

As for the financial report, I shall leave the details to Charles, but in summary to year end 2016 our income was about £67,000, we spent about £80,000, and we currently have about £22,000 in the bank. All positive news and a good, sound footing upon which to move forward into 2017/18.

### **The CoM and OSJCT**

Throughout the year we have worked to support the OSJCT homes, primarily in their heartlands of Wiltshire and Gloucestershire thanks to the leadership of Sarah and valiant support of local companions; particular thanks to Max Rumney has taken on Wiltshire. Again we have been active in many of the homes, as well as attending the county parties and providing funding for outings and visits.

Our Christmas initiative in providing cribs, supplied from the Marian shrine in Kevelaer, Germany was a particular success. These were really well received and made a great contribution to the seasonal celebrations. We would like I think to extend this project next Christmas, increasing the number of homes that we supply.

Special mention should also be made of the OU CoM in this context, who amongst other activities during term time run a pop-up café in the Isis OSJCT Home.

Presently, we are working with Kit, the head of volunteering in the OSJCT Homes, to refocus our efforts and increase the extent of our involvement and volunteering in the Homes. Firstly, we want to match current Companions to their nearest Homes and make sure that volunteering is made easy; a dedicated mailing will shortly go out on this. Secondly, we are identifying Homes in particular need of support, with a view to recruiting Companions from their local parishes to help as volunteer visitors and befrienders.

It should not be forgotten though that not all our work with the elderly is in OSJCT homes, nor need it be. We have a weekly bridge club in a BUPA home in Battersea. Whilst residents from St. Wilfrid's, Chelsea and the Royal Hospital Chelsea make up our guests at our bi-monthly Oratory tea parties. Likewise our Northumberland Tea Parties led by our amazing Alice are not restricted to just OSJCT residents.

#### **By Region:-**

**London** [[katemackenzie@btconnect.com](mailto:katemackenzie@btconnect.com) (Thursday Café), [patrick@knollys.co.uk](mailto:patrick@knollys.co.uk) (Monday Soup Run), [helenaletman@gmail.com](mailto:helenaletman@gmail.com) (Wednesday Breakfast Club)]

Firstly, particular thanks to Anthony Delarue who has this year handed over his lead of the Thursday Café to Kate. It is undoubtedly the case that Anthony's hard work and devotion has been key to the success of this project and we and our guests are hugely grateful too him (as well as for the hours he continues to put in on Thursday and now Wednesday). Many thanks as well to Kate for taking up the reins so brilliantly and for all her organisation.

Our Monday team led by Paddy (our Quartermaster extraordinary) also deserve to be mentioned in dispatches for unfailingly every Monday of the year (except Bank Holidays when EAT is closed) driving around the West End collecting sandwiches and distributing them to the assembled crowds of the poor and homeless in Lincoln's Inn Fields between 7.45pm-8.30pm.

Really exciting too has been the start of our Breakfast Club at the Ordinariate Church (see the special mention of this project in the Cardinal's Appeal). Happily this has attracted a whole host of new volunteers and cooks! It is a really wonderful place and atmosphere, offering real comfort and solace to our guests.

The hope always is that through such contact the vulnerable people we help, so often ignored and frequently abused, can be helped off the streets back into the mainstream. Indeed we are following the progress of the Homelessness Reduction Bill, and will make sure that our guests (normally men who do not fit the current eligibility criteria) benefit from whatever further help becomes available.

As for our Oratory Tea Parties, these are fantastic occasions and huge thanks go to Helena, Sylvia, Marie-Chantal, Katrin, Victoria (Miles) and Maggie and all the others who work so hard to host these events. The next one will be coming up in June.

**Birmingham & West Midlands: Adrian de Redman [[blue.candle2@hotmail.com](mailto:blue.candle2@hotmail.com) – 07799 188 628]**

Birmingham has also had a busy year. In particular the annual Newman Pilgrimage at the Birmingham Oratory was a great success, attended by the Archbishop of Birmingham and representatives of Birmingham City Council was a great success. The formal lunch after was also well attended and good fun. This was plainly a very important occasion for our BrumComs and we are most grateful to the Archbishop for his kind words at lunch, prayers and support for our work.

More recently there was another fantastic Birmingham Lourdes reunion at which the CoM played our full part, as you can read from the report of the reunion attached.

As always also our BrumComs continue with their monthly decade of the Rosary for the good of the Order and Companions after the 11.00am Pilgrims Mass at the Birmingham Oratory (*on the first Saturday of each month*). All are welcome, so if you are in the area do get along if you can and of course contact Adrian if you need help getting there.

**Gloucestershire & Wiltshire: Sarah Cornell [[sarahcornell@sky.com](mailto:sarahcornell@sky.com) – 07817 499 829, [Rumney@mail.com](mailto:Rumney@mail.com) - 07590 851417]**

On to our spectacular G&W Com, who undoubtedly merit a report all of their own; it is impossible to do justice to all that has been going on in a few lines. During the year G&W turned out in great numbers to support the Gloucestershire Homes' Party – many thanks to Louise, Lavinia, Max, Pat, Elizabeth, Sue and Anna amongst others for their efforts.

We also had a delightful and much appreciated visit for Athelstan residents to the house of local Companion Anna Longridge, and of course another home visit to Sydenhams with Mass, hosted as in previous years so wonderfully by Julia & Peter Barton.

As Sarah wrote in the course of the year, 'wonderful Companions visiting, arranging tea parties, helping art classes, bingo, movement mornings, poetry sessions, gardening, taking in dogs and grandchildren. All low key things but giving pleasure to the residents in the OSJ Care Homes. Most recently thanks to Tuft Dobson who hosted a super CoM coffee morning for residents of Paternoster House.

In addition several Companions in Cirencester are regularly supporting the homeless there by helping on a Monday night, offering food and friendship to those marginalized in the town. Louise Smail has taken on the cooking for the homeless once a week. Thank you Louise. The parcels at Christmas have proved invaluable all

through the winter, enabling us to provide clean clothes and wash bags to those in need. Thank you again for those.

**The Northern Marches: Fred Wyrley-Birch [[f.wyrley-birch@andersonandgarland.com](mailto:f.wyrley-birch@andersonandgarland.com) – 07790 132 834]**

Northumberland continue to hold their highly successful tea parties. Thank you especially to Alice for all her work in organizing these, and thanks to all of you who manage to help. This is a real highlight for our guests, with a sing-along, a very jolly game of bingo and other attractions. This is such a wonderful project, and has of course inspired the CoM in London to do the same. This is really something we could roll out in every part of the country, so if you want to have a go in your area do give me, or Helena (07798 558109) or Alice a call.

**Scotland [[liam@liamdevlin.co.uk](mailto:liam@liamdevlin.co.uk) – 07968 119 895] and Marc Morris [[marc\\_morris@outlook.com](mailto:marc_morris@outlook.com) - 07961 206436]**

Liam Devlin with the help of a revitalized group including David McClure, the Scottish Delegate, and Tim Hall, Ian Southward, Marc Morris and Liam Hackett, are expanding our work in Scotland. Liam is involved in teaching English as a foreign language to refugees asylum-seekers, whilst other Companions are running the wonderful Coatbridge project for those with special needs, which we have been able to support with a substantial grant. It is very exciting also that, thanks to Marc's enthusiasm, our CoM group in St.Andrews has got off to such a terrific start. A full report from Liam D (Convener for Scotland) on the many activities in which Scottish Companions are engaged is attached.

#### **Oxford University CoM: Hamish Hiscock**

A heartfelt thank you to Dan Mullins for all his work as head of the OU CoM, as he steps down with the end of his studies at Oxford. Welcome though to Hamish Hiscock, who is taking over. We are enormously proud of the work that the OU CoM manage in between their studies, from the pop-up café in our Isis OSJCT Home to the Open House and other homeless initiatives.

OU CoM continues to be a shining example of what can be achieved with youth and enthusiasm, and is an inspiration to our other University groups. If you know of anyone going up to Oxford in the Autumn do let them know about the CoM at the University and put them in touch with Hamish. The OU CoM termly dinners, one which I was privileged enough to attend, are also great fun.

**South East: Jamie O'Meara [[jamie.omeara@btinternet.com](mailto:jamie.omeara@btinternet.com) – 07771 566 100]**

The main event over the last year for our SE CoM was the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the foundation of the St. Wilfrid's OSJCT Home, Arundel last July. It was a marvellous effort by all concerned, and much appreciated by the residents and

staff of the home alike. We were very pleased to help fund the celebrations with a £200 donation to home also.

It is great to rekindle our good relationship with the home, after various changes in personnel, and hope that we can continue to support them. Unfortunately, we lack critical mass in the SE but if you can help Jamie and Sean Armstrong do be in touch with them direct.

**South West: Duncan McKechnie, [[dajmck@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:dajmck@tiscali.co.uk)- 07990 594 441]**

Duncan reports that the St. Rose School, holiday camp visit to the Calvert trust, Exmoor was again a huge success and much appreciated. Jackie, the principal of St. Rose wrote:

*'.. a great big thank you for supporting us once again ,what a fantastic trip it was ! We all really do appreciate your support! Thank you.'*

With your continued support we would hope to be in a position to repeat our commitment to the school this year. These heavily disabled youngsters would simply not get this opportunity without you.

**East Anglia: Georgie Holtevens ([georgie@holtevens.plus.com](mailto:georgie@holtevens.plus.com))**

Moving eastwards at our Colchester 'soup kitchen' we are now feeding 10-20 people each week at Wednesday lunchtimes, drawn from the local homeless and marginalized. Many thanks to our regular helpers Nick, Marie, Sally, Ellen, Gemma, Caroline, Margaret, Cilla and Sonia. Do come and join us if you can.

Doubtless though one of the highlights of the year was the EA CoM Christmas lunch for local homeless, offering roast turkey, potatoes, parsnips, sprouts, sausages etc etc with a good hot pudding ( apple crumble and mince pies). The spike in the EA expenditure can I think be forgiven, as more than 25 guests attended, had a great time and received their Christmas parcels.

As part of EA we can also now include our Cambridge University CoM headed up by Mathew Schellhorn. They recently had a very well attended reception that raised some £300 to help them get going. Mathew is working on developing links with Addenbrooke's Hospital, to offer volunteering opportunities. A group has already been able to visit the Colchester project. Other possibilities include helping at Walsingham (would that we could assist Mgr Armitage perhaps as first aiders).

## **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding remains absolutely central to everything we do. The unified safeguarding policy adopted last year continues to be our governing document. Much work has been done recently, however, developing the final suite of policies and protocols to accompany the same, and it hoped that these will be rolled out for

approval as soon as possible (indeed I have promised to set aside some time in Lourdes to get this task completed, so that they may be available at the AGM). In any event they will be posted on our website as soon as approved and adopted by the Order.

In addition we will be promulgating a simple volunteer registration form to meet safeguarding guidance, to be completed by those attending our many activities involving vulnerable adults. In addition that is to our stated aim of systematically obtaining DBS clearance for Companions.

### **Plans and Projects**

The Nehemiah Project: You will recall that this an existing programme for the rehabilitation of young addicts, often ex-offenders, supported by the Bishop's Conference. After a series of meetings on this Nehemiah are due to present us with a menu of volunteering options, to which we will be trying to match some of our London Companions. Joanna Whittaker is closely involved with the project and at her suggestion we are poised to appoint a liaison Companion to assist.

World Youth Camp 2018: The wheels are also starting in motion for the World Youth Camp in the UK next year. The CoM have been invited to be in charge of transport (meeting/greeting and logistics etc). The first demand upon us is that we raise a substantial sum, this is a big ask and will mean some dedicated fund raising. All suggestions gratefully received. Presently we may turn our annual Autumn get together into a fund raiser. Beyond that the exact timetable should be produced by the end of the year, so that early in 2018 we can sign up to specific tasks.

These alongside, of course, all of our existing projects aiding Our Lords the Poor and the development of our work in the Care Homes.

### **Overseas**

On the international front, I am pleased to say that we have through 2016/17 maintained our support for poor Christian families in Bethlehem, as we have before. This as you know is our contribution to support the increasingly threatened Christian communities in this part of the world, and continues the work of Fr. Elvin who established this initiative.

Robert Atwater has visited the project and has been extremely moved by the plight of these families. He is full of praise for Anton Mousallam who heads this up locally, and who is punctilious in providing details of the families helped and the destination of our grants. In the light of this I hope that you will approve council's decision that continue our support for this work.

We have also been able to continue our support for the Order's work generally for the relief of the refugee crisis, and the work of the Order in Lebanon through our support for the Holy Family Hospital and the Lebanon Camp.

## Website

We are (v. slowly) working on our website: <http://orderofmalta.org.uk/companions>  
Thankfully Brendan Brett (ex-Oxford Uni CoM), has stepped up to the plate, but if you would like to assist I can be reached as you know on 07730 070403 or at [pletman@3harecourt.com](mailto:pletman@3harecourt.com) or via Annie, our uber-efficient secretary on [secretary.companions@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.companions@gmail.com).

## Securing the Future

Almost last, but certainly not least, we need to plan for the future in terms of personnel. We have a brilliant new coordinator in London in Kate, and fantastically Max in Wiltshire, Hamish in Oxford, Mathew in Cambridge, Marc in St. Andrews.

But Sarah as our longest serving coordinator has rightly announced that she will retire on 01 October 2017. We need someone just as inspirational to take over, to continue the wonderful work that she has done. That could be you.

In other areas the same applies and we must now actively seek to secure suitable successors to ensure that the CoM continues to grow and prosper. In this context also may I say that after 6 years at the helm, this will be my last year. I will make sure though that a new energetic Chair is found who can lead us to greater things (and who writes shorter reports).

## The Official Business of the AGM

In addition to the reports, this comprises firstly the requisite annual review of our subscription, at £60. It is proposed that this is held again at its existing level so as not to discourage existing or new Companions; though as observed last year (with acknowledgements to Rob Coke) that is no bar to anyone giving more!

Further, we need to set a budget. In the light of the figures referred to above and detailed by Charles, may I commend the attached budget which proposes a spend of £70,700 for the current year. This of course is only a guide and can be reviewed if needs be during the course of the year. And, yes, it does not balance and we will have to be careful about some of our heads of expense, but on the basis of our current figures it should be sustainable.

And so it remains only for me once again to thank all Companions for your heroic efforts over the last year, the love for those we serve, your support and prayers.

**Many thanks and God bless,**



Paul Letman  
CHAIR CoM